

THE GEORGE PARTRIDGE SCHOLARSHIP

Spring is the season for awards and scholarships for seniors. The details of the awarding and granting so occupy all concerned that the significance of the donor who made the scholarship possible gets little notice. One such is the George Partridge fund which for nearly 150 years has had more to do with education in Duxbury than is generally noted. It is a matter that needs attention and this Bicentennial year is a good time for it.

The life and accomplishments of George Partridge would fill a book but briefly given, he was a teacher turned statesman, representing Duxbury on committees and in the legislature just preceding and during the Revolution. His services to the colonies was important and far reaching; his name was known and his council sought by leaders from George Washington down to the selectmen of Duxbury. He is a man who should not be forgotten.

At the close of the war, George Partridge returned to Duxbury to live on a large farm he inherited from an uncle, the house and acres that run from Washington St. way through to South Station St. and which extended to Partridge Rd., land now partly property of Charles Eaton Jr. While he farmed these acres he also served as sheriff of Plymouth County and continued concerned with the affairs of his town.

In due time George Partridge wrote his will, making provisions for family and friends in a way that reveals much about him, but with 2 provisions that were for the benefit of the town and which to this day continue to benefit his town. One bequest was to The First Parish and the other to the town of Duxbury. This second is the one I call attention to this spring when graduation plans are in the air.

An item in the will of George Partridge gave to 5 men, named as Trustees:

"...the sum of \$10,000 in the 6 percent stock of the United States, in trust for the establishment of a school or academy in the Town of Duxbury, and my will is that the said trustees and their successors keep the sum at interest and invest at interest in some safe fund the accruing interest from time to time to be received until accumulation the fund shall be sufficient in the estimation of the trustees for the purchase of a lot of land, and for the erection of a suitable building

and accommodation for such school or academy..."

We went on in detail to provide for a board of trustees, a self perpetuating board, to administer the fund. George Partridge died July 7, 1828, in his 89th year. By 1840 the fund had so increased that plans were made for the building which was completed in December of that year and the doors opened to the first class in January 1845.

Again I use the time-worn phrase and say that the story of the Academy would fill a book. The teachers, highly respected in the small town, gave the only available education beyond grammar school. The pupils, some entering at only 12 years of age, after passing very strict entrance examinations, became the beneficiaries of the Partridge bequest. They became the substantial citizens of Duxbury or went on to other place to continue a credit to Duxbury.

When Duxbury was required to provide secondary education, the school board arranged to have the Academy provide it, the town paying the tuition. This arrangement continued from 1893 until Tuesday, June 14, 1927, when the doors of the old Partridge Academy, Duxbury, as a secondary school, were closed forever. Duxbury's new high school took over secondary education but many a citizen of Duxbury today is an alumnus of Partridge Academy, very proud of it.

An empty building comes to no good and Partridge Academy burned to the ground in 1934, but that was not the end of the Partridge bequest. The trustees salvaged what money they could and decided to use the income for scholarships, a decision that no one doubted would have had the approval of George Partridge. Now scholarships are made annually to Duxbury boys and girls. The fund still exists, the self-perpetuating board of trustees continues, Duxbury students still benefit from the bequest, but over the years the donor has been all but forgotten and that should not be so. Trustees, graduates, and school officials must bear the responsibility for that state. As long as there is a George Partridge scholarship, recipients should be told about the man who made it possible. The Honorable George Partridge, Duxbury's first statesman who served the town, the colonies, and the new United States with distinction.

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